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SUBJECT: Bush's Speech, Syria/Russia, Syria/North Korea, Palestinian Territories, Lebanon (9/14-16)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on September 15 reported President Bush's televised speech on September 13 announcing gradual pullout of US forces from Iraq. Isan Dari, Chief Editor of government-owned Tishreen criticized Bush's speech saying that the speech cannot conceal "the failures and defects" of the US Administration. Dari also ridiculed President Bush's accusations to Syria and Iran on demolishing the Iraqi government's performance.

Papers on September 14 reported President Asad's meeting on September 13 with Russian President's Special Envoy, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Sultanov focusing on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and Iraq. Independent al-Watan on 9/16 quoted Sultanov as denying Syria's intention to interfere in the Lebanese presidential elections.

Papers on September 16 reported that the Disarmament Conference in Geneva adopted for the first time in nine years a chairmanship report prepared by Chairman of the Conference and Syria's permanent envoy Faisal al-Hamwi, concluding the deliberations of the Conference that lasted nine months. The adopted chairmanship Syrian report deals with the Conference's achievements for 2007, most noteworthy of which was initiating negotiations for a global treaty of nuclear disarmament, stopping the nuclear arms race, setting negative security guarantees including international arrangements guaranteeing that nuclear weapons will not be used against countries that don't possess them, nor will nuclear weapons be used to threaten these countries. This report can be interpreted as an answer to recent US accusation to Syria on illicit nuclear cooperation with North Korea which Syria has denied.

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"For the first time in 9 years, the Disarmament Conference in Geneva adopts a report prepared by Syria" (Independent al-Watan, 9/16)

"A fierce US-Israeli campaign against Syria accusing it of nuclear activity" (Independent al-Watan, 9/16)

"Bush announces a gradual withdrawal of troops in an effort to contain pressures" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 9/14)

"The killing of four US soldiers raises the death toll to 3780. President Bush will stay in Iraq. A thorny legacy for his successor" (Government-owned Tishreen, 9/15)

"The United Nations: Syria bears the biggest burden, and the United Nations is incapable of meeting the needs of the Iraqi refugees" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 9/16)

"President Asad confers with Sultanov, the Russian President's envoy. Sultanov: Our relations are very good and cooperation covers all domains. Both countries sustain continuing contacts and consultation" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 9/14)

"Sultanov: Syria has no intention to interfere in Lebanese presidential elections" (Al-Watan, 9/16)

"French FM Kouchner will meet FM Mouallem in New York" (Independent al-Watan, 9/16)

"Russia supports the reconciliation initiative by Lebanese Parliament Speaker Berri. President Lahoud: Resolving the crisis starts from inside Lebanon" (Government-owned Tishreen, 9/15)

"Blair's senior advisor: We failed in Iraq. We were too optimistic" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 9/14)

"Israeli incursions in the Palestinian territories prevent thousands of Palestinian worshipers from visiting the al-Aqsa mosque" (Government-owned Tishreen, 9/15)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"A Party of Presidential Blustering"

Isam Dari, chief editor of government-owned Tishreen, wrote (9/15): "Bush's talk in his televised speech about US achievements in Iraq cannot convince Americans, before anyone else...." "Despite his announcement that he intends to reduce the number of the US troops in Iraq, he ignores US and international calls for a timetable for the withdrawal from this country..."

"In the televised party of lies, Syria and Iran, as usual, had a share of the presidential blustering, for these two countries are working to 'undermine the work of the Iraqi Government.' Enough is enough, President Bush. Is It Syria -- which accorded the Iraqi prime minister a hospitable reception and expressed willingness to cooperate with the Iraqis by all means in order to restore security, peace, and stability to Iraq -- that is threatening the work of the Iraqi Government, or it is it your personal interference and the interference of your government team in every small and big detail in the Iraqi internal affair?

"Who criticized Mr. Nuri al-Maliki because he visited Syria and Iran in search for an independent role for the Iraqi Government based on coordination with the neighboring countries?

"Wait, Mr. Bush, from now on, the criminal cannot blame his crimes and failure on others and does not have the right to frighten the neighboring countries with 'the extremists pursuing the path of violence' and announce that those extremists are 'targeting the people of these countries as well.'

"The presidential blustering parties can by no means conceal the defects and failures of this administration; they rather make things worse and aggravate the situation not only in Iraq, but also in the entire region and world."

"What is New Is the Magnitude of Lie"

Abdul Fattah Awad, chief editor of government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (9/16): "The chorus has started a new black song this time about a

Syrian-Korean nuclear cooperation....

"Syria got used in the past years to hear such lies and to confront them. It is not the first time Syria is charged with false accusations. What is new this time is the magnitude of the lies and the way it spread.

"We do not underestimate the lie and its influence with our recognition that the occupation of Iraq was based on a lie.

"Syria suffered from lies in the past years, but they were proven to be mere accusations and lies. And the new flagrant lie will also be proven as such....

"Israel kept silent after its recent aggression and violation of Syrian airspace. While we heard poisonous leaks coming from Washington. We are having various scenarios which aim to give the Israeli aggression some of legitimacy. But the volume of the lie might be a prelude for more assault against Syria. That is what explains that the beginning signal came from Washington as voiced by the ill-famed John Bolton....

"Syria is not in a position to defend itself on this issue as Syria itself is demanding the world community to dismantle Israel's nuclear weapons and persists in establishing a WMD zone in the region. Syria strongly believes that it is imperative to make Israel abide by international law that bans the possession of nuclear arms without international inspection...."

"Petraeus and Crocker Deepen US Split on Iraq"

Ahmad Dawwa, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (9/14): "The Petraeus-Crocker report contained clear and flagrant fallacies, which indicate the extent of the US political and security confusion in Iraq....

"Blaming what is happening in Iraq on Iraqis themselves and the neighboring countries shows disregard for Iraqis and the international community, which admitted that America invaded Iraq without the UN approval, something which holds it responsible for all the Iraqi problems and their regional and international repercussions.

"As regards the civil war, the contradiction is manifest in the warning against its outbreak and the confirmation by the Iraqi Government that Iraq is past sliding into this quagmire....

"The significance of this report does not lie only in its failure to beautify the situation in Iraq, but also in deepening the US split over this file, contrary to what Bush and his team were looking for."

Corbin